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Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries, and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries on H.R. 4890 The Reauthorization of P.L. 88-309

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Recommended Citation

Hargis, W. J. (1980) Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries, and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries on H.R. 4890 The Reauthorization of P.L. 88-309. Marine Resource Report No. 80-6. Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary. <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/m2-5naw-kw54>

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON FISHERIES, AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
AND THE ENVIRONMENT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES
ON
H.R. 4890
THE REAUTHORIZATION OF P.L. 88-309

BY

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School of Marine Science
College of William and Mary

Washington, D.C.
February 11, 1980

Virginia Marine Resources Report #80-6

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee:

My name is William J. Hargis. I am Dean of the School of Marine Science and Director of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science of the College of William and Mary in Virginia.

I, also, serve as Chairman of the Coastal States Organization, Advisor to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Member of the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council.

Though, not here to speak for either of these organizations it is worth noting that my testimony is based upon my twenty-five years of experience in biological and fisheries oceanography and of service with organizations such as these.

It is a pleasure to be able to appear before you to urge the continuation of the valuable program which has been carried forward under the provisions of Public Law 88-309.

In this testimony I wish to urge passage of H.R. 4890, the reauthorization of P.L. 88-309 for the fiscal years '81, '82, and '83. I wish, also, to join my colleagues in urging authorization and later appropriation of specific amounts of money to cover the essential activities of the Act. Specifically, these amounts of money would be \$10,000,000/yr. for Section 4(a) and \$3,000,000/yr. for Section 4(b) and \$500,000/yr. for Section 4(c).

We have learned and done much under the provisions of P.L. 88-309, but we have much more to learn. Since the Act was passed many changes and improvements have occurred in the fisheries of the United States but much more remain to be done.

Comments 88-309 Reauthorization

The Commercial Fisheries and Development Act has been and continues to be a significant factor in commercial fisheries research. Specifically at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, the work performed has covered a variety of topics ranging from ecological studies of finfish and crustacean nursery areas, monitoring and mapping of molluscan resources, gear development for mechanized harvest of mulluscs and offshore survey of underutilized finfish and crustacean resources. These projects have complemented the other programs of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission which is the management agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, conducted with funds from the Act.

The products from these studies (reports, articles, maps and equipment design) have been useful to Virginia interests as well as to those of the broader commerical fishery industry of the Virginian Sea. Many of the data have continuing utility to the fishery management agency of Virginia in evaluation of resource potentials, assessment of impact for major development projects such as sanitary treatment facilities, ports development and industry setting.

Commercial fisheries within the Commonwealth of Virginia and those waters plied by fisherman based in Virginia ports are significant. Indeed the last several years have seen a 3-fold increase in value of Virginia commercial catch from about \$20 million in 1971 to almost 60 million in 1978. In large part the growth has been from stocks in the offshore area (Figure 1) attached shows that growth. Rising prices for fishery products has increased the overall value of the industry to the Commonwealth. We, in

Virginia, are blessed with a rich inshore area, the Chesapeake Bay and a broad, rich continental shelf, the Virginian Sea. Within these areas are fisheries which have roots in the colonial era, that is, oysters and hard clams, anadromous fish, to those with less than a decade of significant exploitation, that is, scallops. The problems faced by the fishermen, processors, and marketing sectors of the industry are diverse and beyond detailing in these brief comments. Needless to say the reauthorization of the act at the levels available in FY 78-80 will allow us to address some of the larger problems that help perpetuate these commercial fisheries.

I wish to emphasize that this act is the lead funding vehicle for molluscan and crustacean fishery resource assessment, monitoring and research. To reduce funding or fail to reauthorize the act would be a severe blow to the commercial fisheries of the over thirty coastal states, Commonwealths and Territories to say nothing of the inland states, as Mr. Alperin mentioned. Further, development of the Fishery Conservation Management Act of 1976 (FCMA) and the State-Federal fishery management program require the continued assessment and further research on the biology of the affected species, commercial and sport catch statistics, the economic aspects of the fishery and sociological and demographic characteristics of the industry from individual fishermen to the retailer levels. These studies most logically would be pursued under the provisions of the act.

In summary, I believe the provisions of the act and work performed since its initial passage (in 1964) have in large part contributed to the growth of our domestic commercial fisheries. I believe as do many other, that the future of our inshore and offshore fishery resource management lies in effective use and adequate commitment of funds to the Commercial Fisheries Research and Development Act.

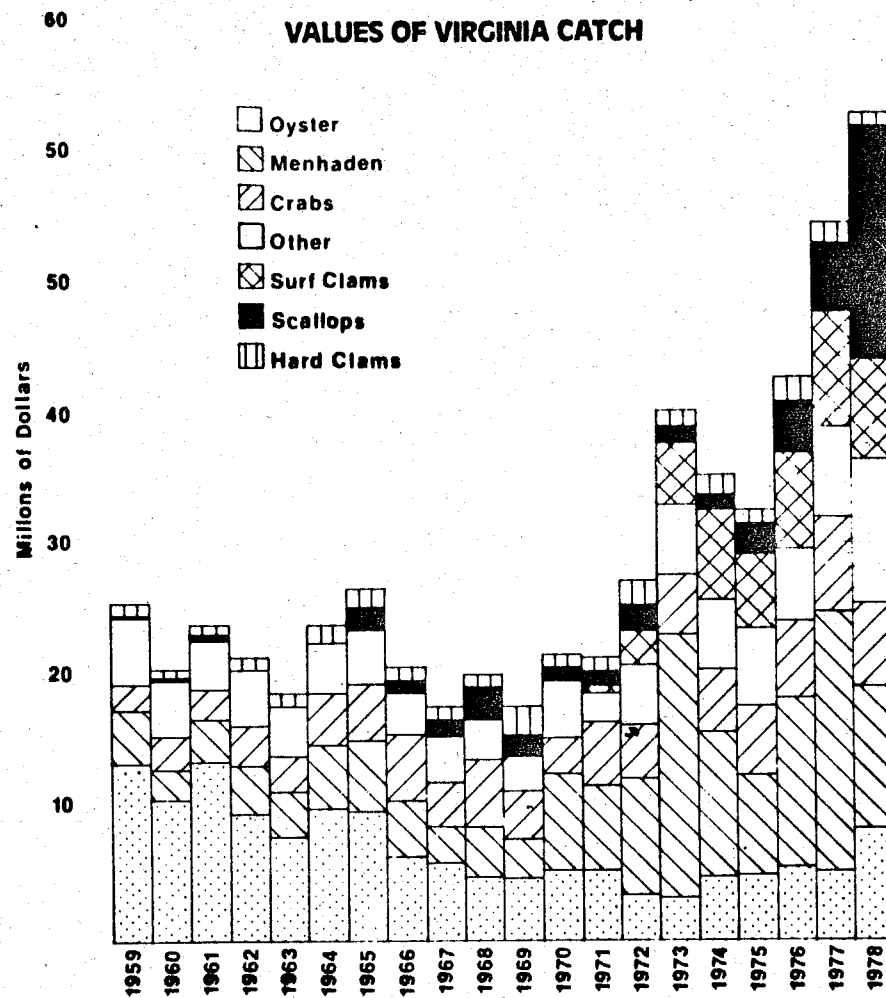


Table 1

From Eightieth and Eighty-First Annual Reports
of the
Marine Resources Commission